

der in Moscow Lenin had ordered the arrest of all Allied subjects in Russia. The mission could do little more than gather information, which it managed to convey despite Soviet vigilance, to Consul Etherton back in Kashgar. Finally, when the ground became too hot for them, the British left Tashkent and, again via Sin-Kiang, reached India.

In the meantime operations in Transcaspia were being undertaken on a larger scale. The Russian forces of the provisional Ashkhabad government were reinforced by Turkoman regiments and Indian troops, the latter having passed through eastern Iran. This heterogeneous group possessed only one common link—hatred of the Bolsheviks. The Russian troops themselves represented diverse elements, including some Cossack units and a large percentage of personnel skilled in military engineering and the manning of railroads and artillery. The British-Indian troops comprised the 19th Punjab Infantry Regiment and some elements of the 8th Light Cavalry. The most interesting contingent from the political angle was, however, the Teke-Turkoman units. Their participation introduced a factor of nationalist ambitions into the counterrevolutionary struggle.

This combined Russo-Indian-Turkoman force took the initiative and pushed toward the northeast, capturing Annenkov and the famous oasis of Merv. For some time the front was stabilized around Merv, as neither party was able to carry on further offensives. General Malleson's forces could not risk extending their lines of communication too far. Furthermore, they were greatly outnumbered by the combined Red and Austro-German prisoner forces. The latter also faced problems that precluded an offensive. They had to wage war on at least three fronts, including the

central-southern sector
of Khiva-Bukhara and the eastern sector,
where the Orenburg Cos-
sacks molested them along the Tashkent-
Orenburg railway line.
Moreover, owing to the aggressive spirit
displayed by the Bolsheviks
in their dealings with Khiva and Bukhara,
many irregular bands,
composed of devout Moslems, came into being
and waged a fierce
guerrilla warfare against the pro-Bolshevik
troops. These bands,
known as Basmatchi, combined ordinary
banditry with patriotism
and proved to be a source of constant
irritation to Tashkent. Their
organization was, to be sure, very feeble; yet
in that very fact lay also